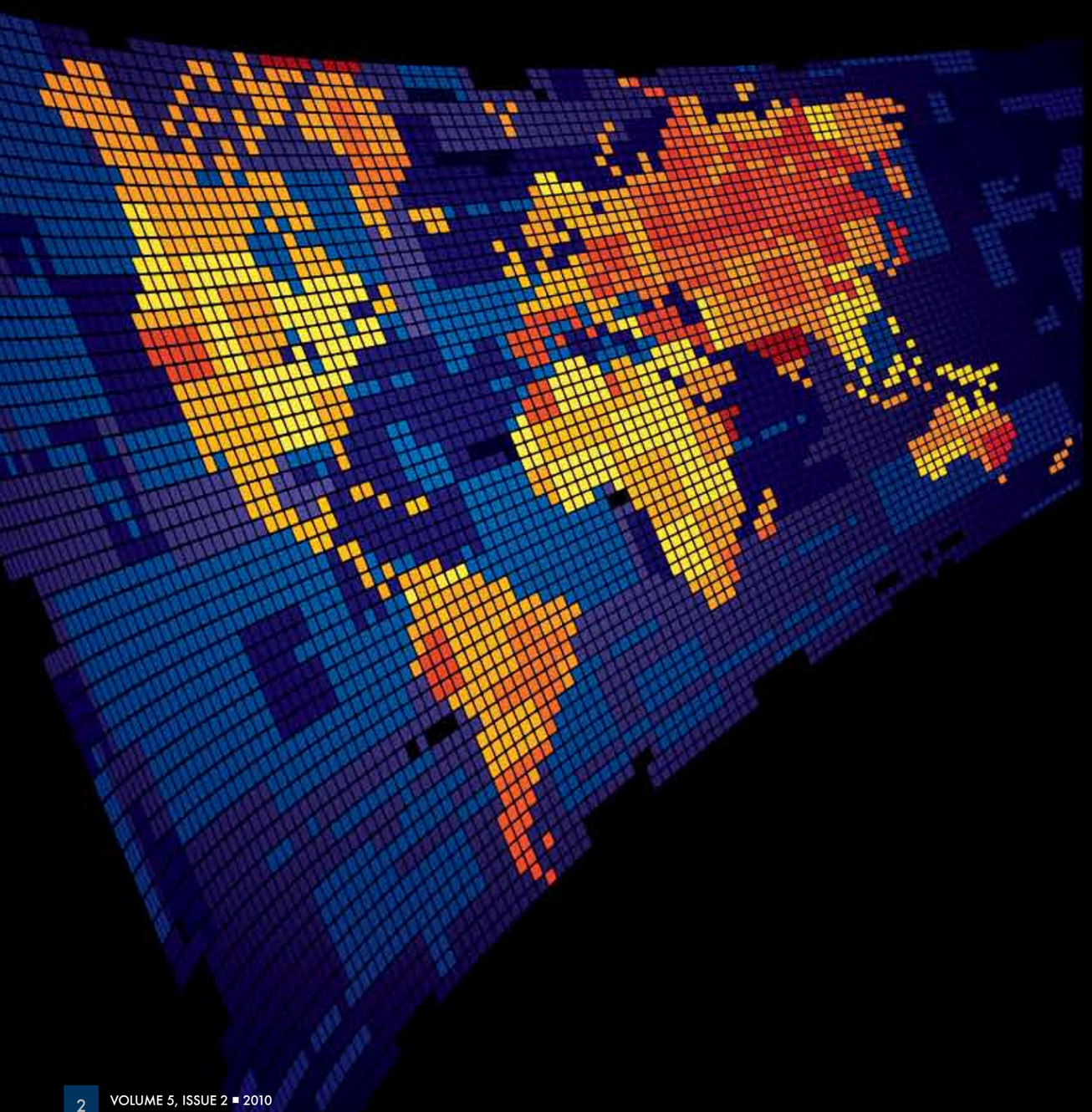

New DoD Laboratory Network System

By: Richard Searles, FHP&R Staff Writer

There are numerous laboratories, programs, and activities within the Department of Defense (DoD) with analytic and/or response capabilities regarding chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) events. These elements play a critical role in identifying and responding to DoD and potential civilian events involving CBRN agents as well as other hazardous agents of military significance. In an effort to help facilitate the coordination between these DoD elements, the Department is in the process of establishing the DoD Laboratory Network, DLN.

Policy and guidelines under which the DLN will operate are currently being established and can be found in the draft DoD Instruction 6440.cc. "Department of Defense Laboratory Network (DLN)". Civil Military Medicine (CMM), a division of Force Health Protection and Readiness, is the lead in cooperation with other proponents in the establishment of this new instruction. Other proponents include the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland and America's Security Affairs.

Earlier this year, CMM brought representatives from various DoD elements to the National Capital Region to discuss the draft instruction.

"All Services, the Joint Staff, and relevant Defense agencies have been actively involved in creating this instruction," said Donald Thurston, a Public Health policy analyst with CMM. "They have incorporated the input of their respective General Counsels."

The DoD calls for the creation of a network of DoD CBRN laboratories, programs, and activities with analytic and/or related CBRN response capabilities. The issuance establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides instructions which allow the network to coordinate execution, develop consensus, and make recommendations governing the detection, identification, characterization, diagnosis, and reporting of CBRN and other all-hazards agents of military significance.

"The establishment of a coordinated and operational system of DoD laboratories, programs, and activities possessing analytic and/or response capabilities is a major step forward for DoD," said Thurston. "Once established and maintained, it will provide timely, high-quality, actionable results for early detection, confirmation, and effective consequence management of acts of terrorism or warfare involving CBRN agents, an emerging infectious disease, and other all-hazards events requiring an integrated laboratory response."

Additionally, the DLN system will:

- Ensure a clear definition of current and necessary capabilities
- Improve data collection, interrogation, interpretation, fusion, and networking
- Harmonize, validate, and enhance quality assurance and/or quality control of laboratory protocols and methods
- Standardize the reporting of results
- Provide a unified DoD position on related issues external to DoD

Once established, the DLN will function as an active member network of the federal interagency Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) and its Network Coordinating Group (NCG) in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement and the Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks Charge and Charter.

Individual DLN member laboratories, programs, and activities may also serve as members of any of the individual laboratory networks comprising the ICLN. DoD laboratories will provide Defense Support of Civil Authorities in accordance with appropriate authorizations.

The DLN requirements definition and approval process will be conducted using the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System as specified in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3170.01G. The report standardization and data tagging, sharing, searching, retrieving, and networking aspects of the DLN will be developed as specified in the DoD Net-Centric Data Strategy. The Information Technology (IT) systems and services supporting the operation of the DLN will be developed, tested, and certified in accordance with CJCSI 6212.01E.